

VZCZCXRO2868
RR RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #0929/01 1590946
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 080948Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0985
INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0230
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000929

SIPDIS
USOSCE FOR ELIZABETH KAUFMAN
DRL FOR RACHEL WALDSTEIN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/08
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: OSCE SPONSORS HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION WORKSHOPS
IN TASHKENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P. Buckley, Second Secretary, Department of
State, Political and Economic Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: On June 4 in Tashkent the Organization of
Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sponsored a workshop on
education efforts to promote awareness on human rights, which
attracted several high-profile government officials and several
international experts. A separate June 5 event jointly sponsored
by OSCE and the Ministry of Justice's Center for Increasing
Qualifications of Lawyers focused on educating judicial and law
enforcement officers on human rights. The two events offered an
opportunity to expose more Government of Uzbekistan officials to
the concepts of human rights, although these "safe" forums are
illustrative of the limited scale of human dimension activity that
the OSCE mission is restricted to here. Director of the National
Center for Human Rights Akmal Saidov made some interesting
statements on encouraging enhanced human rights awareness for
defense lawyers, but at the same time the new government-controlled
bar association is administering a controversial subjective
licensing exam that raises doubts about how far the Government of
Uzbekistan is ready to go in "empowering" defense attorneys. End
summary.

Human Rights Education Workshop

12. (U) On June 4 the Ambassador attended an OSCE-sponsored workshop
entitled "Relevant Questions of Education in the Area of Human
Rights" in Tashkent. Saidov, the lead speaker, told the assembled
group of government officials, international expert speakers, and
diplomats that Uzbekistan had adopted more than 70 international
documents pertaining to human rights, including six major legally
binding instruments. "We have made it a priority to focus on
education," he noted, adding that one-third of government spending
in 2009 is earmarked for education. "Large-scale education reform
is underway," according to Saidov, and he said this has already
included the development of special courses, textbooks, and other
materials devoted to increasing understanding about human rights
among the population. He further stated that Uzbekistan is
committed to continuing dialogue on human rights in the framework
of the UN through its Human Rights Council and he referenced

Uzbekistan's recent Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, which he said was positive. Saidov said Uzbekistan donated USD 100,000 to the UN High Commission on Human Rights, which made it the largest donor (along with Norway). He also cited President Karimov's special decree last year commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reported that there have been more than 800 educational activities throughout the country pursuant to the decree.

¶3. (U) Pavel Hatsuk, Human Rights Advisor at OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), noted in his presentation that one challenge to increasing human rights education around the world is a lack of specific training for teachers as well as insufficient political will to make expansion of human rights education a priority. Valeriy Lazarev, Professor at the Moscow State Legal Academy, lamented that "unfortunately, in the Russian Federation not much attention is paid to the restriction of human rights" in the country. Lazarev's presentation drew a rebuttal from Saidov, who commented that "we do not want to put civil society and government in opposition." Rather, he said "we want to continue a social partnership" and "we have to have a balance."

¶4. (U) An Amcit professor from Tulane University, who spoke in Russian about the U.S. experience in human rights education, touched on a wide range of issues including gender equality, sexual orientation, immigrant rights, and racial profiling. Uzbek

TASHKENT 00000929 002 OF 003

participants at the conference are accustomed to thinking about a much more limited definition of human rights and, while these topics would be very sensitive in Uzbekistan, the presentation helped broaden horizons and demonstrate that the U.S. is constantly grappling with human rights-related concerns. Saidov again took the opportunity to provide a nuanced response, remarking that "we each have our own contexts" and "blind copying will not yield positive results for every country." (Comment: This is a subtle way of suggesting that Uzbekistan should not be held to the same standards on human rights as Western countries.)

Human Rights Awareness for Law Enforcement

¶5. (U) A separate conference was held on June 5, also co-sponsored by OSCE but this time in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice's Center for Increasing Qualifications of Lawyers. The same international speakers as the June 4 event also delivered presentations, and this event was entitled "Relevant Human Rights Training Questions for Employees of Judicial and Law Enforcement Agencies." Large turnout by law enforcement representatives brought attendance up to approximately 100. Deputy Minister of Justice Akmal Kholbaev recapped Uzbekistan's efforts to increase the awareness of human rights and said "the legal framework is improving every year" thanks to a national human rights training program and a national program for raising awareness of human rights. Kholmbaev specifically thanked both OSCE and ODIHR for its efforts, which is a rare mention of the latter entity in a country that generally seeks to minimize the human dimension. Human Rights Ombudswoman Sayyora Rashidova noted that in 1995 her office received 262 complaints from citizens about human rights, and by 2008 this increased to 8,816, which she sees as an indicator of the Government of Uzbekistan's success in raising awareness and confidence among the public about human rights. She added that prior to 2004 most complaints were related to alleged abuses by law enforcement officers but that now the majority are rooted in social and economic problems, which she attributed to successful training efforts for Uzbek law enforcement bodies.

Enhancing Skills of Defense Attorneys

¶6. (SBU) Saidov, building on his remarks at the similar June 4 event, noted that "there are two levels of human rights standards - universal and also regional," again perhaps to encourage the audience not to examine Uzbekistan through the same lense as other countries. Saidov then shifted gears, stating that "it is high time for us to introduce judicial law" and that "we need to establish real independence of courts" and upgrade the knowledge among defense attorneys about human rights. He also conceded that "we presently have no coordination of in-service training programs" for government officials and called for the new Chamber of Lawyers to take a lead role in making improvements.

ODIHR Official Seeks More Aggressive Human Rights Efforts

¶7. (C) Bernard Rouault, the Senior Project Officer at the Tashkent
TASHKENT 00000929 003 OF 003

OSCE Project Coordination Office informed poloff on the margins of the June 4 event that his office sent human rights activist (and reliable Embassy contact) Sukhrob Ismoilov of the Rapid Reaction Group to ODIHR's offices in Warsaw for meetings and that plans are in the works to arrange for Ismoilov and perhaps another activist to participate in upcoming human dimension meetings in Vienna. Pavel Hatsuk, Human Rights Advisor at ODIHR, approached emboffs on the margins of the June 5 event and noted the value of Ismoilov's consultations with ODIHR, which the Tashkent office funded out of its budget. "Frankly, we wish this office would do much more of this type of human rights support," Hatsuk said, and he opined (protect) that the Tashkent OSCE office is generally too cautious in trying not to irk the host government.

Comment:

¶8. (SBU) The two events were useful in that they provided some visibility for discussions of human rights concepts, yet they were also very "safe" and allowed government officials - who have honed similar presentations at similar workshops around the country - to deliver a choreographed message about the government's progress on human rights with no challenge. Yet this is the extent of approved human dimension work in Uzbekistan and exemplifies the limitations imposed on the local OSCE office by the Government of Uzbekistan, which, at the same time, attempts to use the organization as a tool to gain credibility. Nonetheless, the Tashkent OSCE's decision to push the envelope by sending activists to Europe will irritate the Government of Uzbekistan and may change the dynamics of its relationship. (Note: In this and other respects, we would view Hatsuk's view that the Tashkent OSCE office is "too cautious" as facile and focused on too-short a time horizon given the realities of what it takes to be effective in Central Asia.) Saidov's remarks about upgrading human rights qualifications of defense attorneys sound good, but at the same time the newly-created government-controlled Chamber of Lawyers lacks independence and is administering a controversial subjective and non-transparent licensing exam which all defense attorneys must pass by July 1 or

be sidelined (septel).
NORLAND